United Nations A/C.1/58/PV.5

General Assembly

Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

First Committee

5th meeting

Thursday, 9 October 2003, 10 a.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Jarmo Sareva ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 62 to 80

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items (*continued*)

Ms. Bethel (Bahamas): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 14 members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are Members of the United Nations, namely Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and my own country, the Bahamas. CARICOM delegations congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of your Bureau, on your election to guide the work of this most challenging and important Committee, and we are confident that you will guide our work to a successful conclusion. We pledge our full support and cooperation in this regard.

CARICOM delegations wish to pay tribute to the work of Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, former Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his years of dedicated service, and extend congratulations to Mr. Nobuyasu Abe on his recent appointment to succeed Mr. Dhanapala. We offer Mr. Abe our fullest cooperation and thank him for his introductory remarks highlighting some of the more pressing disarmament and international security issues facing the First Committee at the current session, including that of its organizational reform. CARICOM delegations also wish to pay tribute to the staff of the Department for Disarmament Affairs for their sterling work throughout the year.

A brief survey of the current climate prevailing in the disarmament and arms control arena does not inspire much confidence that we, as the Member States, are living up to our obligations contained in the Charter to preserve international peace and security. As CARICOM delegations affirmed before this body last year, the progressive reduction of armaments and the achievement of the goal of general and complete disarmament are inextricably linked to attaining and maintaining peace and security and enabling us to reach our stated goal of the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The year 2003 has been one of setbacks for the multilateral disarmament regime, as confidence in critical treaties has been undermined, agreement on enhanced verification measures remains elusive, stalemate still prevails in the Conference on Disarmament and global military expenditures continue to rise. It is perhaps not surprising then that proposals have come from varied quarters to re-examine the role of this Committee in promoting the disarmament agenda. CARICOM States welcome the intention of you, Mr. Chairman, to engage in informal consultations with the members of the Committee in an effort to revitalize and rationalize the work of this Committee, in concert with the ongoing process of the revitalization of the General Assembly as a whole.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

03-54919 (E)

CARICOM States are also aware that a number of delegations have undertaken bilateral consultations on this matter. We welcome the transparency and frank dialogue that have characterized the process thus far, and look forward to continuing discussions on practical and realistic ways in which to make the work of this Committee, and thus the General Assembly as a whole, have a greater impact on the global disarmament agenda and the current threats facing the international community. We wish to sound a note of caution, however, so that, in seeking to make the Committee more relevant, we do not achieve the opposite by removing certain issues from its purview or choosing to eliminate, because of a lack of progress, consideration of issues that remain unresolved.

The issue of weapons of mass destruction has been at the forefront of concerns relating to international peace and security over the past year. CARICOM States have noted with concern that some of the critical legal instruments governing the multilateral disarmament agenda have come under threat or have stalled in implementation in 2003. We reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We also call on all States parties to the NPT to fully implement their obligations under article VI of the Treaty, and the commitments made at the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

In this context, CARICOM States also call for a renewed commitment to promoting the entry into force, and the implementation of both the letter and the spirit, of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). As we are all aware, just one month ago the Third Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT met to accelerate the Treaty's entry into force. Regrettably, that goal remains elusive, due to the absence of prompt signature and ratification of the CTBT by those States whose ratification is needed for its entry into force.

We applaud the work of the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) in promoting the entry into force of the Treaty, particularly its regional activities in this regard. For their part, CARICOM States participated in a regional seminar, held in Jamaica in December 2002, designed to promote universal adherence to the CTBT in the Latin American and Caribbean region. We also welcome the conclusion of a cooperation agreement between the CTBTO and the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) — the first of its kind for the CTBTO.

We are strongly committed to the process of regional cooperation in promoting nuclear non-proliferation and the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones. It is a source of immense satisfaction to CARICOM States that the Treaty of Tlatelolco now commands universal adherence in Latin America and the Caribbean, and CARICOM looks forward to the convening of the eighteenth session of the General Conference of OPANAL, to be held in Havana, Cuba, in November of this year. We encourage other States engaged in discussions on the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones to continue to move those processes forward in pursuit of the important goal of non-proliferation.

We, as members of the international community, have committed ourselves to the control and elimination of certain types of weapons, having recognized the indiscriminate and devastating effects that such weapons have on military and civilian populations alike. In this context, CARICOM States are committed to the enforcement of the conventions governing the development, production and use of chemical and biological weapons. In this regard, CARICOM States are also committed to the process of developing and enhancing verification arrangements governing the development, production and use of biological weapons, as a means to promote greater levels of confidence among States.

While the spectre of weapons of mass destruction hangs over us all, the international community has rightly recognized and decided to act on the growing threat posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. CARICOM States are strongly committed to the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in July 2001. It is no exaggeration to say that small arms and light weapons pose the single biggest threat to the national security and economic and social development of many of our small countries, as well as those countries in other regions of the world plagued by intra- and inter-State conflict. As stated by CARICOM delegations at that Conference and in other forums since, small arms and light weapons in our region have been used by those who

would seek to destabilize the region through criminal networks involved in the trafficking of drugs, weapons and human beings. These activities pose a dangerous challenge to our security infrastructure and are helping to undermine the economic and social fabric of our nations by contributing to a rise in crime, particularly violent crime.

Faced with this multifaceted threat, CARICOM States have welcomed the degree of cooperation engaged in at the bilateral, subregional, regional and international levels, including through the work of the CARICOM secretariat, the Organization of American States and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, all of which have provided assistance in the implementation of the Programme of Action and other agreements aimed at controlling the proliferation of these weapons.

However, as acknowledged at the First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, held in July this year, far too much remains to be done. We consider the Programme of Action a small but important first step that must be augmented by commitments to establish transfer controls in producer countries, to regulate brokering and to facilitate the reliable and harmonized marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons. We also call on producer States to exercise greater levels of scrutiny of end-user certificates and border controls. As was recognized at the July meeting, no State alone can prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Utilizing the tools currently at our disposal and creating new ones will ensure that combined national and collective action will enable the international community to eradicate this deadly trade, which has already contributed to so much human tragedy.

Another issue of overriding concern to the Caribbean region remains the transhipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean Sea. While recognizing the right of States to the peaceful uses of nuclear material, CARICOM countries maintain that these shipments, and the consequent potential for accidents, represent a serious threat to the economic development of our region. Accordingly, CARICOM States would support the establishment of a comprehensive regulatory framework to promote State responsibility with respect to disclosure, liability and compensation in the event of accidents.

It is clear that much uncertainty hangs over the current disarmament regime, as we grapple with unresolved issues and seek ways to address new threats, including the proliferation of small arms and the potential for weapons of mass destruction to pass from States into the possession of non-State actors. Thus, while engaging in discussions concerning the future work of the Committee, CARICOM States also reaffirm that the time has come to take a firm decision to convene the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We have agreed that there are many new threats confronting us, as well as old threats that continue to haunt us. Therefore it is time to reaffirm our commitment to existing principles, as well as to agree on some new strategies to guide us as we seek to address these threats. CARICOM States are disappointed that we were unable to reach consensus this year on the objectives and agenda of the session. However, we welcome the opportunity to continue our discussions on this matter in a frank and constructive fashion.

While there is ample reason to be discouraged, it would be unacceptable for the international community to turn its back on certain disarmament issues — indeed, it would be impossible for it to do so. The previous decade was marked by increased commitments by all Member States to social and economic development. Yet, as we all know, there can be no development without security and no security without development. We must therefore redouble our efforts in implementing both sides of this equation or else we will have failed to live up to the obligations contained in the Charter.

Mr. Kazykhanov (Kazakhstan): Please allow me to congratulate you on your election to the high office of the chairmanship of the First Committee and express confidence that, under your able stewardship substantive progress will be made in addressing important issues on the agenda of this committee. I would also like to express my appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Nobuyasu Abe for his introductory remarks made at the opening meeting here.

Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction remains one of the most serious challenges to global security. In the more than 30 years of existence of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), compliance with the nuclear disarmament obligation has turned into one of the thorniest problems, aggravated by an emerging trend to

reconsider the role of nuclear weapons as a deterrent. Many speakers here have already expressed their serious concern that the NPT has been slowly eroded as a result of weakened international commitment.

My delegation fully shares these concerns and calls for a strengthened and universal application of the existing regimes of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and believes that the current international agreements in this area should be adapted to new realities.

The United Nations and its institutions should play a vital role in solving the problem of the proliferation of nuclear weapons. There is actually only one direction to follow: strengthen and tighten controls over the non-proliferation regime, and improve transparency in the areas of weapons development and testing.

As the site of the former Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground, my country has first-hand knowledge of the horrendous effects of nuclear testing. Therefore, Kazakhstan calls for an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). A moratorium on test explosions is a basis for nuclear non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. The CTBT's entry into force will transform that political action into a legally binding commitment and legitimize a host of measures taken by the international community in support of such a ban.

We are convinced that the establishment of new internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world is compatible with the goal to ensure the integrity and sustainability of the international non-proliferation regime, and will contribute to the strengthening of peace and security in various regions and, hence, in the entire world. As a State that voluntarily renounced its nuclear heritage, possessing at one time the fourth largest nuclear arsenal in the world, Kazakhstan is actively involved in negotiations to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

Kazakhstan strongly supports efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to ensure global nuclear safety. Reinforcement of effective mechanisms developed by the IAEA to strengthen the international system of safeguards, will further contribute to practical solutions for the problems facing the international community in this area.

As a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Kazakhstan is strongly committed to its obligations under the Convention. We also welcome the efforts by the State parties to the Biological Weapons Convention to develop agreed mechanisms of its strengthening.

Kazakhstan is concerned by the fact that the Conference on Disarmament continues to be deadlocked and that it has failed to agree on its programme of work. As a symbol of multilateral efforts, the Conference on Disarmament must be allowed to play its mandated role and resume its substantive work. Further and more results-oriented efforts to prevent illegal production of and trafficking in small arms are no less important.

The international community should adopt coordinated measures to prevent and reduce the excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms, which undermine efforts to ensure indivisible and comprehensive security. The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its aspects, adopted by the 2001 United Nations Conference on this issue, represents an unprecedented high-level effort to achieve an international consensus on how to address this problem.

It is crucially important to develop and implement agreed international measures to prevent and combat illicit trafficking in and manufacture of small arms and light weapons and to reduce their excessive and destabilizing accumulation throughout the world. We believe that the United Nations should play a leading role in this process.

Kazakhstan supports the provisions of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons. We express confidence that this document will make a considerable contribution to global efforts to implement the United Nations Conference's Programme of Action.

Kazakhstan supports the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms by providing information on a regular basis, since 1992, and considers the Register the most important component of the export control system. This year, Kazakhstan provided information and data to the Register on military expenditures for fiscal year 2002. We welcome the broadest possible

participation of United Nations Member States in this important international instrument, which should contribute to the efforts to ensure international peace and security.

We are also in favour of another transparency measure taken by the United Nations — the standardized instrument for reporting military expenditures — and sponsored a draft resolution on this issue in the First Committee.

Export control over nuclear material, equipment, dual-use technologies and weapons is an important element of nuclear non-proliferation policy because of the danger of possible access by non-State actors to materials used to produce weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, Kazakhstan considers it important to strengthen its national export control system. We also believe that expanded cooperation between States to improve export control systems is a very effective way to counter international terrorism. Such cooperation can be especially meaningful at the regional level.

Taking this into account, Kazakhstan hosted last June the seventh non-proliferation and export control forum of the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus, attended also by representatives of other countries and international organizations. The participants in the forum developed interaction mechanisms for use with customs officials, border guards and other services in order to prevent diversion of dual-use technologies, materials and know-how, which could be used to produce weapons of mass destruction as well as their delivery systems.

In our view, effective coordination between the United Nations and regional arrangements is an important element for a renewed model of international security and stability. In supporting the United Nations efforts to strengthen the role of regional arrangements in the area of security, Kazakhstan is making tangible contributions to efforts to strengthen regional stability and security in Asia.

The implementation of President Nazarbaev's initiative to convene a conference on interaction and confidence-building in Asia is well on track. Further support of this process by the United Nations and its cooperation in this matter will go a long way towards creating a climate of trust and good-neighbourliness in Asia.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization also has great potential in terms of contributing to regional and global stability and security. Kazakhstan has proposed to establish in Almaty a Central Asian preventive diplomacy and conflict management centre under United Nations auspices and is calling for its support. Such an institution will strengthen United Nations activities in the region, which should be in the interest of all countries concerned.

Finally, I would like once again to assure you that we will fully support all efforts by this Committee to adopt decisions which will strengthen the non-proliferation regime and promote security at regional and global levels. My delegation stands ready, as it invariably has at previous sessions, to work together with our colleagues to achieve our common goals.

Ms. Mangray (Guyana): Allow me, at the outset, to express sincere congratulations to you on your election as Chairman of this Committee, and to all the members of the Bureau. Your leadership thus far has confirmed that our confidence in your abilities is well-placed. My delegation also takes this opportunity to welcome Mr. Nobuyasu Abe. We look forward to benefiting from his wisdom in the course of our deliberations.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the Bahamas, on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). However, I wish to highlight a few points of particular interest to my delegation.

I wish to place on record Guyana's concern about the disastrous impact of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons on the socio-economic fabric of our societies. Millions have lost their lives or been maimed, particularly innocent civilians and, overwhelmingly, women and children. The large majority of conflicts are fuelled by small arms and light weapons. Serious human rights violations have occurred, including the tragic phenomenon of child soldiers. In many instances, an increase in violence is occurring in countries with a limited capacity for dealing effectively with this problem. Moreover, small arms and light weapons have contributed to the creation of an environment hostile to trade and investment, much needed in our countries. The international community is now faced with the destabilizing effects and security implications of the

excessive accumulation and transfer of these arms and weapons.

Guyana has long had in place the basic legislative and administrative infrastructure for the control of arms, ammunition and explosives. These, however, are under consideration for review, in light of the changing patterns in domestic criminality and the need to form international alliances in the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In this context, my country is working with its CARICOM partners, within the framework of the CARICOM Regional Task Force on Crime and Security, to tackle these and related problems. At the same time, the umbrella of collective security offered by the United Nations remains of paramount importance in safeguarding the welfare of States, particularly that of small States. If I may say so, smallness must no longer be seen as an invitation to aggression, but rather as a virtue to be prized and protected. This will only be possible if, together, we strengthen the multilateral regime on which our collective security depends.

Against this background, we welcome the convening of the First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects at the National, Regional and Global levels, held in New York from 7 to 11 July 2003. The Meeting has taken stock of progress made since the Programme of Action was adopted in 2001 and identified a number of issues where further progress needs to be made. The First Committee now has the important task of building on the outcome of that Meeting, and its efforts to address that issue and to act upon the recommendations made by the Group of Governmental Experts on Tracing Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Given the destructive impact of this trade, serious consideration of this subject should remain a priority in the work of the First Committee.

Another scourge that needs to be eradicated is the presence of anti-personnel landmines, which kill or maim thousands of people every year. My Government is fully committed to this objective. In August of this year, Guyana deposited its instrument of ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The Fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention was held last month in Bangkok to advance the implementation of the Convention. We wish to register our profound appreciation to the Kingdom of Thailand for the excellent arrangements made and the warm hospitality accorded, which contributed to a worthy outcome.

We call upon all States to renew their efforts to support and advance the care, rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of mine victims and to support mine-awareness programmes and the removal of anti-personnel mines in the various regions of the world. To this end, we look forward to the outcome of the First Review Conference in 2004.

In closing, let me state that my delegation stands ready to work with you and with all delegations to advance the disarmament agenda. We would look positively on any constructive proposals made towards that end.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, Mr. Chairman, I would like to congratulate you on your election to this post. It is very gratifying for us to see in the chair such a highly-skilled professional who represents a friendly neighbouring country, and we wish you success and will try to assist you to that end. I would also like to welcome Ambassador Abe, who is participating in the current session for the first time as United Nations Under-Secretary-General. We are ready for the closest kind of cooperation with him. We are also glad to see here in this room the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Sergei Ordzhonikidze and we wish him success in his work with all of us.

The Russian Federation attaches great importance to enhancing the cohesion of the international community, with the United Nations in a central role, in addressing current issues regarding the maintenance of global security and stability. In his statement from the rostrum of the General Assembly of the United Nations, at the 11th meeting, on 25 September, the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, stressed that, over recent years, the international community and the United Nations have had to deal with fundamentally new tasks and to grapple with global challenges that differ from previous ones, the principal one of these being terrorism. Thus, the President of Russia stated, "the United Nations must become — and is indeed becoming — the basis for a global anti-terrorist coalition". He added that "Russia is convinced that the United Nations must maintain its central role in international affairs".

An effective solution to these problems could be facilitated by the implementation of the Russian initiative to work out a global strategy to counter new challenges and threats, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/145. Incidentally, work is going on in this area to implement the Secretary-General's initiative presented in his statement at the opening of this session. We are counting on the fact that, during the current session, a new resolution will be adopted, which will further specify steps in this direction.

Rapid changes in the world today make it imperative that new approaches be adopted on the disarmament agenda. Efforts in this area are now being undertaken in a political climate that is totally different than before and in which the age of confrontation has become a thing of the past. As a result, broad opportunities are emerging for partnership-based approaches in the area of arms control and disarmament. A striking example of this is the Russian-United States Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty, which entered into force on 1 June 2003. Having taken a legal obligation to reduce strategic offensive potentials by two thirds, the two countries have reaffirmed the continuity of the process of nuclear disarmament and have made a real contribution to the fulfilment of their commitments under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

At the same time, the issue of non-proliferation has acquired a new and dangerous dimension because weapons and other materials of mass destruction are now accessible to terrorists. Without a doubt, the most resolute efforts are required, including innovative approaches, in order to halt the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. Moreover, in so doing, it is extremely important that, as a matter of principle, we rely on time-tested rules of international law and accepted non-proliferation mechanisms and continue our work in order to enhance and improve them, taking into account the interests of the entire international community. Here, success can be achieved only if two principal conditions are met: cohesion on the part of the international community and elimination of the factors that have the potential to give rise to conflict in various regions of the world.

In general, in defining a methodology for resolving current problems in the field of international security, we see no alternative to multilateralism. There can be no doubt that multilateralism is effective, but only if it is cooperative multilateralism that takes into account legitimate interests and the need of all States for undiminished security.

Among specific areas of work aimed at maintaining international security, we attach priority to strengthening the Treaty for the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We should make the most of the preparatory process for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT and seek to ensure that it takes place in a constructive atmosphere and produces positive results. Another logical step in the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament area could be to begin negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament on banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

We welcome the accession of Afghanistan, Cuba and Timor-Leste to the NPT. Once again, we call on the countries that have not yet done so to accede to the Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon States. The Treaty recently encountered new, serious challenges. We consider the statement by the People's Democratic Republic of Korea on withdrawal from the NPT to be a mistake. Russia has consistently favoured a nuclear-free status for the Korean Peninsula, taking into due account the interests and concerns of all parties. The current situation should be addressed exclusively through political and diplomatic means, and the first step has been taken with the launching of the Beijing process. What is most important now is to ensure that the process moves forward with a view to the earliest possible settlement of the problem.

With regard to strengthening the NPT, it is urgent that we improve the effectiveness and credibility of its verification machinery — the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system. We call on all States that have not yet acceded to the Additional Protocol to the IAEA Safeguards Agreement — particularly those that have major nuclear energy programmes and are implementing them — to do so as soon as possible. We support the IAEA's efforts to clarify questions concerning Iran's nuclear programme. We hope that reciprocal efforts will make it possible to resolve the existing concerns in the very near future.

In August, we marked the fortieth anniversary of the signature of the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water, commonly known as the Moscow Treaty. The agreement, whose membership now exceeds 130

States, was one of the first steps undertaken by the international community to contain the nuclear arms race. It created conditions that led to further agreements, which culminated in the 1996 conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which prohibited underground nuclear explosions as well.

We continue to be seriously concerned about the future of the CTBT; we are convinced that there must be no lessening of efforts to ensure its entry into force. Therefore, we welcome the international community's plan of action and political declaration supporting the CTBT, as adopted by the Third Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Treaty. As a matter of principle, it is important that, before the Treaty enters into force, there be compliance with the moratorium on nuclear-weapon tests and on any other nuclear detonations. We express the hope that the 12 States, on which the CTBT's entry into force now depends, will carry out their special responsibility for the Treaty's future. We note the responsible attitude of Afghanistan, Algeria and Kyrgyzstan, which recently ratified the Treaty.

Russia has consistently supported the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Security assurances by the Russian Federation now extend to the more than 100 States that have acceded to the relevant agreements on nuclear-weapon-free zones. If a compromise is achieved on the issue of security assurances in connection with the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty), and if the well-known initiative of the Central Asian States is implemented, the list of countries covered by such assurances will become all the more impressive.

We note with satisfaction that the International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles (INPRO) has been under way since 2001 — under the IAEA's auspices — in the context of the initiative launched by President Putin at the Millennium Summit on providing energy to support the sustainable development of humanity, finding a far-reaching solution to issues related to nuclear non-proliferation and improving the Earth's environmental health, which presupposes a technological solution to nuclear safety and security problems. Fifteen countries and institutions are participating in the project, and Russia will continue to fully support INPRO's implementation, including by providing necessary scientific and technological expertise.

We remain convinced that there can be no delay in resolving the issue of preventing the emplacement of weapons in outer space. In his statement at the current session of the General Assembly, the President of the Russian Federation emphasized that we favour the elaboration of a comprehensive agreement on that issue and invited countries with outer space potential to join our initiative.

At the Conference on Disarmament, Russia and China, together with a group of sponsoring States, introduced a working paper entitled, "Possible elements for a future international legal agreement on the prevention of the deployment of weapons in outer space, the threat or use of force against outer space objects" (CD/1679). That document is receiving increasing attention throughout the world. A preferable venue for future work on such an agreement would be the appropriate ad hoc committee of the Conference on Disarmament. Russia has taken the necessary steps to begin such work and to break the current deadlock of the Conference as a whole.

Russia's proposal to establish a moratorium on the deployment of weapons in outer space, pending relevant agreement, also remains valid. Efforts to ensure predictability of the situation in outer space could be facilitated if the outer space Powers provide the international community with information concerning forthcoming launches of outer space objects and their purposes, which Russia has begun doing this year.

The issue of international information security is also among our priorities at the current General Assembly session. We are submitting an updated draft resolution, entitled, "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security" (A/C.1/58/L.3), which is based on the text of last year's resolution. We hope that the group of governmental experts to be established in 2004 under the draft resolution to prepare a report of the Secretary-General will carefully and objectively consider existing and potential threats in the information security sphere as well as possible cooperative measures to address them.

We consider the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction to be an

effective instrument for preventing the proliferation of those deadly weapons and for reducing the risk of toxic chemicals being used as a means of terror. The best way to prevent chemical weapons leakage is to eliminate them completely. Russia has begun to eliminate its stocks at its Gorny facility, which came into operation this year. Universal adherence to the Convention remains an urgent task, and we welcome Afghanistan's ratification of the Convention.

We intend to participate actively in the efforts of the States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, planned for the period until 2006. We think that such forums are useful for reaching agreement on collective steps aimed at strengthening the Convention. We also continue to believe that the development of legally binding measures for its verification remains a long-term task for strengthening the Convention.

We attach great importance to political and diplomatic means of resolving the problem of missile proliferation. We reaffirm Russia's initiatives concerning a global monitoring system to verify non-proliferation of missiles and missile technologies, aimed at creating a global missile non-proliferation regime. Having supported the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, we believe that the Code is only the first step towards the elaboration of a legally binding multilateral agreement on such a regime. We consider the work done by the Group of Governmental Experts on missiles in the framework of the United Nations to be positive. We believe that it is high time for the Group to proceed with in-depth consideration of the problems on its agenda.

We commend the useful work done in Geneva by the Group of Governmental Experts in the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Progress is evident in the elaboration of the draft of a new instrument designed to reduce the humanitarian consequences of explosive remnants of war.

Discussions have begun concerning the placing of additional restrictions on mines other than antipersonnel landmines. We will continue to take an active part in that process.

We take note of the leading role played by the United Nations in the implementation of a comprehensive approach to the question of small arms and light weapons. Efforts must be redoubled to implement the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, with a major emphasis on combating illicit trafficking in such weapons. Meaningful progress must be made in the implementation of the Programme of Action, which will be followed up at the 2006 review conference.

We have taken note of the considerations voiced by a number of States regarding the improvement of the working methods of the First Committee. We are ready to participate creatively in unofficial discussions on this issue. We deem it worthwhile to consider it in the context of United Nations reform in general, taking into account, first of all, the specific nature of the activities of the United Nations.

The Russian delegation is ready to cooperate constructively and openly with you, Mr. Chairman, and with all delegations in carrying out the challenging tasks facing the First Committee.

Mr. Tesch (Australia): May I join other delegations in expressing our good wishes and congratulations to you on your appointment as Chairman of this very important Committee.

As we begin our work, I think that we should recall that resolutions are not an end in themselves. The First Committee's authority and credibility will inevitably erode if resolutions do not translate into practical outcomes.

We all have a responsibility to make the work of this Committee relevant to current security challenges. It follows that we should concentrate our efforts on the most pressing and widely held concerns. This requires a revitalization and streamlining of its agenda and processes. We welcome the proposal to convene a session on First Committee reform.

The spread of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems represents the most serious threat to international security. This, of course, is not a new threat, and the First Committee has devoted much effort to addressing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. But the demand among proliferators for weapons of mass destruction-related technologies is growing. Increasingly, we face the prospect of such weapons being acquired by States and non-State actors with little regard for the norms of responsible international behaviour.

The development of indigenous weapons of mass destruction-related capabilities in countries of concern is increasing, as is the threat that those countries could make such weapons available to others, including terrorists. The prospect of weapons of mass destruction falling into terrorist hands is unthinkable, and yet it is a challenge we must address collectively and resolutely.

It cannot be denied that we are meeting at a time of strong challenges to the existing non-proliferation and disarmament regime based on treaties such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Biological Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Since we met last, North Korea has been found by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to be in non-compliance with its NPT safeguards obligations and has announced its withdrawal from the NPT. Serious questions have also emerged about the nature of Iran's nuclear programme. There are persistent concerns regarding the compliance of some parties to the other major non-proliferation treaties.

For that reason, we must redouble our efforts to strengthen international disarmament and non-proliferation norms and arrangements. We must be resolute in dealing with cases of non-compliance. We must send an unambiguous message that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction cannot be tolerated.

Members of the non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament treaties share a responsibility to respect and strengthen verification mechanisms in those treaties. In the nuclear field, Australia considers that application of the International Atomic Energy Agency's strengthened safeguards system — the Additional Protocol — should quickly become an essential prerequisite for nuclear supply. It is also our view that wide application of the strengthened safeguards system would encourage further progress on nuclear disarmament.

The threat posed by the proliferation of biological weapons is real and increasing. Australia is committed to renewed efforts to strengthening implementation of the BWC, and we urge all States to participate actively in all BWC meetings leading up to the next review conference, to be held in 2006.

While the major norm-setting work in the area of weapons of mass destruction has been established in the key treaties, important follow-up work has yet to be done. It defies credibility that the widely held aspiration for a fissile material cut-off treaty continues to be frustrated by the Conference on Disarmament's failure to agree on a work programme.

Australia is keen to see the Hague Code of Conduct firmly established as a universal and viable confidence-building measure to help prevent ballistic missile proliferation. Ballistic missiles are the weapon of choice for the delivery of weapons of mass destruction; their proliferation directly affects the security interests of all States. Australia is pleased that 109 States have now subscribed to the Code, although we remain disappointed that so few States in the South-east Asian region have done so to date.

Given the increasing threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, it is incumbent on us to strengthen these arrangements through a range of complementary measures. Foremost is controlling the transfer or illicit trafficking of materials and technology that are related to weapons of mass destruction. All States must be vigilant in ensuring that they do not supply or assist in delivering items that could advance proliferators' weapons of mass destruction or missile programmes.

Making better use of existing tools will help. But the reality is that the existing weapons of mass destruction regime is not, by itself, enough to stop determined proliferators. For that reason, Australia, while continuing to support and engage actively in existing weapons of mass destruction instruments, has joined with others in the Proliferation Security Initiative.

That Initiative is developing practical ways to further impede illicit trafficking in weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems and related materials to and from States and non-State actors of proliferation concern. The interdiction principles agreed between PSI members complement existing non-proliferation regimes and are entirely consistent with international laws. Australia strongly encourages the many States committed to preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction to lend their support to this important initiative.

We are committed to practical disarmament efforts, which have delivered tangible, grass-roots benefits to the international community.

In the area of small arms and light weapons, Australia has been active in promoting implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action. A continuing priority for us will be to work with regional partners to assist Pacific Island countries to strengthen small arms controls and enforcement capacity, which is an important element of international efforts to combat the illicit trade. Australia welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the feasibility of developing an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons.

We are also pleased with the considerable progress achieved to date in negotiations on a protocol on explosive remnants of war. Australia's support for a legally binding instrument stems from our very clear recognition of the serious humanitarian impact on civilian populations that unexploded ordnance has. Australia urges all States to continue efforts to reach consensus on a protocol on explosive remnants of war at the final negotiating session in November.

Australia congratulates Thailand on its successful hosting of the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines. That Convention continues to grow in strength. Among our neighbours, we commend Timor-Leste for having recently acceded to the Convention. But it is lamentable that many States remain outside, including some leading members of the Security Council, most of the Middle East and much of Asia. Australia calls on those States which have yet to accede to do so as soon as possible and to make a clear commitment not to use antipersonnel mines in the interim.

In this forum, we must work to foster international support for practical measures that seek to address existing and emerging threats to international security. We must steer the work of this forum away from the unproductive debate that has stalled progress. The Australian delegation looks forward to working constructively with you, Sir, and with all delegations to help ensure a successful session.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): Let me, at the outset, congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election and assure you that we place our confidence in your capacity to successfully guide our deliberations. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election.

One of the cardinal objectives of the United Nations is to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. In furtherance of that objective, the United Nations, since its inception, has embarked on disarmament measures. It was remarkable that even during the period of super-Power rivalry, discussions and agreements on disarmament continued. Thus, the United Nations, unlike the League of Nations, proved to be an effective Organization, not necessarily for achieving disarmament, but for maintaining dialogue on the levels and the regulation of armaments. That dialogue has, in recent years, resulted in positive gains, which include the adoption and the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Ottawa Convention banning landmines. Nuclear-weapon-free zones have also been established in various parts of the world, and nuclear safeguards have been strengthened.

Despite these positive developments, the rest of the picture is much gloomier. International peace and security continue to face profound challenges in the form of nuclear weapons and conventional arms. While most of the non-nuclear-weapon States continue to meet their obligations under multilateral treaties such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), nuclear-weapon States and some other key States are unwilling to implement their obligations, and some have even refused to sign and ratify those instruments. Instead, they continue to perfect both conventional arms and nuclear weapons. We are told that this is being done in order to meet new threats, and in the name of national security.

The need for serious nuclear disarmament is being undermined by those claims. To make such claims is a clear invitation to other States to acquire nuclear weapons under the same pretext, as, by nature, every State has essential national security interests to protect and new threats to meet. No State or group of States should be allowed to have a monopoly on nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction. The security to which all of us are entitled can be achieved only by means of complete disarmament. With the end of the cold war, there can be no justification for some States to claim the exclusive right to possess these weapons indefinitely. Nuclear-weapon States repeatedly remind other States not to acquire nuclear weapons. If their demands are to be

taken seriously, then they should demonstrate concretely their willingness to eliminate their nuclear weapons within the shortest possible time frame.

Namibia, being a State party to the NPT and the CTBT, continues to fulfil its international obligations under those instruments. States that actually possess nuclear weapons refuse to disarm. The mere mention of nuclear disarmament can upset those who possess such weapons, but it is easy for them to call upon other States to remain non-nuclear and to subject them to threats of unilateral action for allegedly failing to comply with their obligations under the non-proliferation regime. If the provisions of the NPT are to be respected, all States parties must be held equally accountable when they fail to comply with their respective obligations under the Treaty.

It seems to us that those who possess nuclear weapons are preoccupied with preventing other countries from acquiring such weapons, but not with negotiations aimed at eliminating them under strict and effective international control. In that process, nuclear weapons have become a means of exerting pressure on and blackmailing countries that do not have them. But what nuclear-weapon States forget is that such behaviour fosters proliferation. So long as such weapons exist, we have to face the problem of nuclear terrorism with all its ramifications. We believe that the only safe and effective way to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction is the complete elimination of those weapons.

Namibia is committed to the objectives of arms control and the principles of openness and transparency with regard to both weapons of mass destruction and conventional arms. We continue to support General Assembly resolutions on transparency in armaments and military expenditures, which require Member States to supply information on their conventional arms inventories and expenditures. We view that information as essential, as it can help minimize the risk of the arms race and armed conflicts between and among nations. We support the call for the expansion of the scope of the Register of Conventional Arms to include weapons of mass destruction. In order for the Register to be effective, it should be comprehensive and non-discriminatory, and it must address the security concerns of all States.

As we talk about the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, we should not forget about the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In Africa, for example, small arms and light weapons are weapons of mass destruction. Those weapons are in the hands of rebel groups, including child soldiers. They stifle development and cause havoc, death and destruction in the African continent. It is regrettable that none of the countries that are involved in conflict produce those weapons. They come from sources outside Africa which are determined to achieve their selfish political and economic agendas at the expense of the people of Africa. In order to address this menace effectively, there is a need for political will and international cooperation among all those involved, in particular the producers, to ensure that their weapons do not end up in the wrong hands. Furthermore, we call for the speedy and full implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. All States Members of the United Nations have a responsibility to that end.

Ms. Mohamed (Kenya): I wish to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee for the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. I wish to assure you and the other members of the Bureau of my delegation's full support and cooperation. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the former Chairman, the Permanent Representative of Uganda, Ambassador Semakula Kiwanuka, for successfully steering the First Committee during the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

I also congratulate our new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu Abe of Japan, on his appointment to this high post.

Our recent experience in Kenya, where we were twice rocked by terrorist attacks, in 1998 and again in 2002, has taught us only too well that in today's world no nation is an island. We are all interdependent. What happens in one corner of the globe has an almost immediate effect on, and touches upon, other nations elsewhere. Kenya is therefore more convinced than ever before that no one nation can by itself address the many challenges faced by a world that is a global village. In our efforts to deal with common threats brought about by the proliferation of both conventional and non-conventional weapons, we must act collectively to address the issues of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. In all our endeavours,

multilateral, legally binding and verifiable arms control treaties must be adopted as the tools of choice.

It is of particular concern to us that the perpetrators of terrorism have brought terrorism to the doorstep of the United Nations, the symbol of our collective will and purpose. The bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Iraq in August and the consequent loss of United Nations personnel was indeed a wake-up call: terrorism respects neither creed nor boundaries. In our case, terrorist attacks have merely strengthened our resolve to fight this scourge.

Kenya is therefore totally committed to the fight against terrorism. We urge all States to support international efforts to rid the world of this evil in all its manifestations. We also support all measures aimed at preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery and associated technologies. It is for that reason that we commend the activities of the subscribing States to the Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation to achieve its universalization, and we reiterate our support for the Code and other initiatives aimed at achieving universal nuclear non-proliferation.

Terrorism in our region is especially exacerbated by the easy availability of small arms and light weapons. Measures to curb the proliferation of these weapons would therefore greatly advance the war against terrorism. The 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects constituted a watershed of multilateralism. The Programme of Action adopted by the Conference was an unprecedented achievement in global norm-setting and concrete road-mapping. The First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, held in July this year, was testimony to the rising groundswell of a vibrant political momentum for creating, sustaining and supporting national mechanisms for the Programme's implementation. My Government congratulates Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi of Japan on urging the Biennial Meeting to focus its attention on the critical role of international assistance for implementation.

We believe that the Biennial Meeting was highly effective in advancing the process of implementation of the Programme of Action. It strengthened the already strong case for global resource mobilization to meet a global threat. It also echoed the candid voice of the countries most affected by the wrongful use of illicitly circulating weapons. After all, the wearer knows best where the shoe pinches most.

As a country that has suffered greatly from an influx of small arms and light weapons, Kenya is a key player in our subregional efforts to combat the trafficking in small arms and light weapons. In March 2000, Kenya hosted a historic Great Lakes region and Horn of Africa conference on the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. The conference was unique, because it brought together 10 countries of our subregion, some of which at that time were still in conflict. They came together because of their common desire to rid their countries of the enormous quantities of small arms which continued to fuel the raging conflicts. The realization that there was no light at the end of the tunnel unless they came to grips with the situation provided the necessary impetus for a successful conference and outcome.

The conference adopted a Declaration in which it encouraged an agenda for action. The Nairobi Secretariat on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the region was later established to follow up on an agreed plan of action for implementation of the agenda.

The Nairobi plan of action calls for international support for collective projects. We would particularly welcome support for those projects aimed at lawful seizure, voluntary surrender and public destruction of wrongfully acquired small arms and light weapons. The international community's priority must be to support subregional initiatives, since illicit arms trafficking intrinsically thrives upon loopholes resulting from divergent national practices in regulating private arms possession and trading.

We have some concrete ideas for specific projects that would simultaneously address three interrelated problems in our subregion: reducing further the number of weapons in illicit circulation; discouraging their likely use for wrongful purposes; and improving monitoring of the avenues for unaccounted transfers. In designing and carrying out these projects, we look forward to receiving advice and support, particularly from the Conventional Arms Branch of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which is uniquely equipped to assist us in designing projects and mobilizing resources from the international donor community.

The French and Swiss Governments' initiative on tracing and marking deserves special mention. We hope

that during the current session we shall indeed see the launching of negotiations on international instruments to this end.

My delegation takes this opportunity to commend Thailand for its successful hosting in Bangkok of the Fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — the Ottawa Convention. It is encouraging that 141 States have ratified the Convention. We call upon the States who have not yet ratified it to do so. We also commend those that have recently acceded.

The Ottawa Convention is approaching a crossroads in its implementation. The First Review Conference will be held from 29 November to 3 December next year in Nairobi, to consider future operations under the Convention. I take this opportunity to invite all members of the Committee to actively participate in that Conference, as well as in the preparatory meetings, which will be held in Geneva in February and June 2004.

Kenya is encouraged by the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by 168 States, including 41 of the 44 required for its entry into force, and welcomes its ratification by 104 States, including 32 of the 44 needed for its entry into force, 3 being nuclear-weapon States. We urge all States to refrain from any activities that could undermine this treaty and lead to a resumption of the arms race, and to respect their commitment with regard to nuclear-weapons test explosions and any other nuclear explosions, pending the Treaty's entry into force. Kenya calls on all those States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the CTBT without condition; in particular, we call for those ratifications required for the Treaty to enter into force.

The commitments already made by nuclear-weapon States on nuclear disarmament need to be addressed urgently. Nuclear-weapon States have a special responsibility and maybe, in an ironic twist of events, a unique opportunity to discharge it in light of our common concern over the acquisition and use of those weapons by terrorists or non-State actors. We hope that they will rise to the occasion, and we stand ready to cooperate in any way feasible. As always, we reaffirm our commitment to and expectations and aspirations for the noble goals of international disarmament instruments and the objective of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We must, however, express our disappointment with the inadequate progress made in the application of the 13 steps on nuclear disarmament, which were included in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, and express our hope that, in fact, a way forward to strengthen and revitalize them will be found.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the linchpin of the global non-proliferation regime and the basis upon which the argument for nuclear disarmament is founded. Whereas the Treaty does not prohibit the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, international safeguard mechanisms for compliance with the spirit and the letter of the Treaty must be adhered to. In this respect, the International Atomic Energy Agency's international safeguards system must be promoted and strengthened as the main component of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. We urge all States that have not yet done so to accede to the NPT.

Kenya attaches great importance to the successful implementation of both the Chemical Weapons and Biological and Toxin Weapons conventions. We urge States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to make use of the facilities offered by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in order for them to be able to meet their obligations under the Treaty. With regard to the implementation of the Convention on Biological and Toxin Weapons, Kenya urges States parties to utilize the forthcoming meeting of States parties to agree on mutually acceptable legislation that each country can enact to cover the national implementation of the Convention's obligations and other related issues.

The insufficiency of political will has exposed the Conference on Disarmament to criticism for the lack of progress. So, year after year, we all come to the First Committee expressing regret on the existing stalemate and expressing the hope that the following year will be different.

Hope, as Committee members know, is a pleasant acquaintance but an unsafe friend, and so no substantive change has occurred. The Conference on Disarmament is still pregnant with the ideas expressed in its still-to-be adopted work programme, but

continues to suffer from a seven-year period of labour pains.

Although many laudable efforts have been made, including by five ambassadors, which we support, agreement still evades us. I would therefore like to make a special appeal to all members of the Conference on Disarmament to make the additional effort to walk the extra mile needed so as not to undermine the relevance of the Conference on Disarmament. As United States President Abraham Lincoln said many years ago, "I am a slow walker, but I never walk back."

We all need strong and well-functioning multilateral institutions and instruments. Indeed, they have acquired a new urgency and importance. Let us not allow our slow walk to be mistaken for walking back. Certainly let us not allow the progress that has been made to become undone.

My delegation supports the convening of the fourth special General Assembly session devoted to disarmament. In the current fluid and dangerous situation, it is crucial that we garner public support for the process of disarmament and support the establishment of an open-ended working group to prepare for the meeting. For that purpose, we request the Secretary-General to provide the necessary assistance and support.

In conclusion, the United Nations role in today's world is increasingly called into question, as are the roles of its committees. The revitalization of the United Nations, including the First Committee, will of necessity have to take into consideration the prevailing priorities of its members, which, in our opinion, should be collective security geared towards economic and social development for all Members of the United Nations family.

It is inevitable, therefore, that the First Committee, being one of the key Committees of the United Nations, will increasingly come under scrutiny. Kenya is of the view that the review of the First Committee should be undertaken in the spirit underpinning the review of the General Assembly as a whole. It is our belief that such a review should not be addressed to the First Committee in isolation. It is equally important to keep in mind that any review should be tackled in a comprehensive manner to include other institutions that deal with disarmament.

The President: I thank the representative of Kenya for her kinds words addressed to the chair.

Mr. Neil (Jamaica): Jamaica associates itself with the statement delivered earlier this morning by the Permanent Representative of the Bahamas on behalf of the members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). My delegation wishes to make some supplementary remarks from Jamaica's own standpoint.

The goal of general and complete disarmament, including the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, remains a longstanding priority of the United Nations. Yet, our efforts to achieve this objective in the long term have been less than encouraging, particularly so over the past year. Indeed, there has been evidence of a gradual weakening of the existing legal regime governing international disarmament, exacerbated by the resort to actions that fall outside the ambit of the principles of collective security. This has led to situations where the will of the many has been overcome by the might of the few, thus undermining the collective system for international security, which provides the foundation for our disarmament efforts.

Jamaica therefore shares the concern expressed by the Secretary-General that there needs to be a strengthening of global disarmament norms. In our view, such a strengthening has to be based on adherence to multilateral principles carried out in an atmosphere of mutual confidence, non-discrimination, increased transparency, compliance and trust.

Of concern also are new precepts, some of which do not yet have a basis within the international legal regime, which add to instances of parallel disarmament efforts and do little to ensure lasting peace and security. Rather, such actions contribute to a climate of insecurity, erode trust and confidence and lead to a counterproductive and unsatisfactory situation of uncertainty and instability within the international community.

It is within such a situation that the global community also finds itself facing new and worrying threats to international peace and security, including the possibility of access by non-State actors to weapons of mass destruction. Jamaica fully agrees with the need for international action in dealing with these dangers but urges that the search for solutions should be based within a collective, non-discriminatory and transparent framework.

The steadily increasing expenditure in armaments, which now totals approximately $800 billion, is a great cause for concern. While the majority of the expenditure is dominated by a few large spenders, many other countries have increased spending in armaments as a response to perceived internal or external security threats. Jamaica is of the view that increased militarization enhances the likelihood of a military response as a first option to the resolution of conflict and does little to improve security, especially in the context of regional rivalries.

Jamaica remains committed to the cause of general and complete disarmament. This commitment has been made evident by Jamaica's ratification of a number of disarmament conventions, its compliance with its obligations under these conventions, and the active pursuit of appropriate measures to ensure compliance. We remain fully supportive of the aims and objectives of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in seeking to eliminate the spread and use of nuclear weapons, particularly in the strengthening of the regime in relation to vertical and horizontal proliferation. Jamaica attaches importance to the adherence to the article VI obligations which would give greater credibility to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and assurance to concerns of non-nuclear-weapon States.

In relation to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Jamaica signed the Protocol Additional to the Agreement between Jamaica and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards, on 19 March 2003.

Jamaica also supports the full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and participated in the first NPT Review Conference. We have also been working actively with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Secretariat to promote the universality of the CWC within the Caribbean region. At this juncture, I wish to express appreciation to the Director-General of the OPCW for the technical assistance which has been made available to Jamaica so as to allow for our effective implementation and administration of CWC.

As a party to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), Jamaica supports and urges its early entry into force. As part of this process, Jamaica was pleased to host in December 2002 a workshop on international cooperation and national implementation of the CTBT, which attracted participants from the Caribbean and Latin American subregion.

Jamaica continues to regret the continued stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament. We believe that it may now be appropriate for there to be a review of the issue of negotiating machinery and its relationship to the First Committee. Such a review could be carried out within the context of the fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, the holding of which is clearly necessary and which Jamaica fully supports.

The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPOA) remains integral to the establishment of global norms to deal with illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons.

The First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, which took place here in New York in July, provided a useful and timely opportunity to take stock of the progress of implementation. I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi of Japan for her successful chairmanship of that meeting. We look forward to the second biennial meeting to be held in 2005, as well as to the review conference in 2006.

Jamaica was honoured to have been a member of the Group of Governmental Experts on Tracing Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, established by the Secretary-General. We fully support the need for an international convention on the marking and tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons and urge this Committee to agree to the recommendation made by the Group for the launching of negotiations on such an instrument.

As a State Party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, Jamaica welcomes the successful conclusion of the Fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention, held recently in Thailand, and looks forward to the first review conference to be held in 2004 in Nairobi, Kenya. We urge the full implementation of this Convention and wish to commend those countries that have taken active steps to destroy their stockpiles of antipersonnel mines.

In conclusion, allow me to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election to

guide the work of this Committee. You can be assured of the support and cooperation of my delegation in the discharge of your duties, particularly in seeking to examine ways and means to streamline the work of this Committee, which we believe should be within the context of the overall revitalization of the General Assembly. I also welcome the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, and applaud him and the other members of his Department for the commendable work they are doing for disarmament.

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone): My delegation would like to join others in formally extending our warmest congratulations to you on your election to direct the affairs of this Committee. Following the saying which the Chairman quoted on Monday, I would like to assure him that we will not attempt to offer him any advice. However we assure him that our delegation is willing and ready to assist him and members of the Bureau in fulfilling their responsibilities. I would also like to welcome the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, who, in his statement on Monday, set the scene for this general debate on all disarmament issues.

Mr. Abe and the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization, have provided a lucid account of the current state of affairs in the area of disarmament and arms control. In my delegation's view, the situation is not encouraging. Previous speakers in this debate have already identified the major elements, mainly procedural, that continue to cast a thick cloud over the entire multilateral disarmament process.

In the interest of time, my delegation will not repeat all of these elements. These elements comprise, in our view, a series of failures and disappointments in and by the Committee on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission, and in efforts concerning the objectives and agenda of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Some say these failures or disappointments are attributable to the lack of political will. Others say they are due to a lack of trust. Whatever the causes of the current stalemate, my delegation believes that it is pertinent to ask, where do we go from here? How do we get out of this impasse? What is the way forward?

In the view of my delegation, we must first understand that in the current international environment, disarmament is no longer a choice but an absolute necessity, not just for a few States, but for all States. It appears that we have still not yet grasped the true nature and gravity of the nuclear threat. We have yet to understand that disarmament is not a game of political chess, but a vital shield against self-destruction or mutual annihilation.

Secondly, we must erase the misperception that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is solely directed at non-nuclear-weapon and potential nuclear-weapon States. It appears that public opinion or public attention is being focused on the spread of nuclear weapons and attempts by certain States to acquire nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

On the other hand, the mutual obligations and responsibilities of both nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon States under the Treaty have been virtually submerged in the issues of verification and compliance.

In searching for the way forward, we need to focus on both horizontal and vertical proliferation. My delegation shares the view of the Secretary-General that nuclear-weapon States have, for their part, done little to diminish the symbolic importance of these weapons and too little to fulfil their commitment to undertake, in good faith, efforts at moving forward towards nuclear arms reductions and ultimate disarmament.

While drawing public attention to the issues of verification and compliance, we need to re-emphasize the obligation of nuclear-weapon States under article VI of the Treaty to eliminate their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament.

This brings me to the issue of compliance and penalties for non-compliance. How should non-compliance with commitments under disarmament regimes be dealt with? What should be the response of the international community to non-compliance or even renunciation or withdrawal of legal obligations under those regimes? Armed force? The threat of use of force? Sanctions or diplomacy? Is it necessary at this stage to speak of strengthening enforcement provisions in regimes dealing with weapons of mass destruction? Would such a move resolve the equally threatening incidence and serious problems of vertical proliferation?

In our view, those are questions that we should be addressing at this critical juncture for international peace and security. As the Secretary-General states in his report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, while there was in one particular instance consensus on the need to disarm, there was no agreement on the means to achieve that aim.

My delegation believes that while it is absolutely necessary for the international community, including the Security Council, to take non-compliance seriously as a threat to international peace and security, it is also necessary to find the most appropriate means of dealing with non-participation in the major multilateral disarmament regimes by States that possess or have the capability of developing nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. In other words, we should vigorously promote the universality of those regimes.

We cannot afford to use a big stick against the selected few that are already on board but fail to meet their obligations or that threaten those who want to get off, while at the same time do absolutely nothing about others who should be on board but who refuse to come on board. In order to advance the processes of peace, disarmament and international security, we must abandon that selective and discriminatory approach to compliance and verification.

Failure to achieve universality with respect to key multilateral disarmament regimes such as the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) undermines those regimes. It also poses a serious threat to international peace and security. Incidentally, I should say that Sierra Leone is a party to both the NPT and the CTBT.

We share the legitimate universal concern about the growing fear that non-State actors may acquire weapons of mass destruction, including chemical, biological and even nuclear weapons. Efforts are underway to deal with that new challenge to humankind. However, we believe that the most effective way of alleviating that fear and ensuring that terrorists do not have access to weapons of mass destruction is to eliminate those weapons, and to work relentlessly to do so.

The devastation that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has caused in several parts of the world, including in my own country, Sierra Leone, is well known. While our attention is being drawn to the threat of the possible access to weapons of mass destruction by non-State actors, namely, terrorists, we fail to understand why the issue of access by non-State actors to illicit arms and light weapons — the so-called issue of the civilian possession of arms — remains a controversial issue. In the hands of non-State actors, such as rebels, bandits and mercenaries engaged in terrorist activities in areas such as West Africa, those weapons have killed thousands of people and continue to pose a serious threat to peace and security in our regions.

We recall that the issue of such weapons in the hands of non-State actors almost wrecked the 2001 Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In our view, the Programme of Action adopted by the Conference contains absolutely nothing on that issue. We remain concerned that small arms and light weapons should be transferred only to States or their authorized agents, and not to non-State actors, most of whom are engaged in terrorist activities that continue to claim the lives of thousands of our people and to destabilize our countries.

We note that in her summary Ambassador Inoguchi of Japan, the chairperson of the first Biennial Meeting of States to consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, which was recently held in New York, highlighted the linkage between terrorism and illicit small arms and light weapons. We agree that to prevent terrorists and other criminal organizations from acquiring small arms and light weapons, States should be encouraged to develop relevant norms and standards to regulate the illegal circulation of those weapons. We therefore endorse the findings and conclusions contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms on the feasibility of developing an international instrument to enable States to identify, mark and trace illicit small arms and light weapons.

Yet another way forward to break the current stalemate in our multilateral disarmament process is for us to consider disarmament, not for its own sake, but as a vital means of enhancing human security for all in all its aspects. Specifically, we must place the question of disarmament and development at the top of our agenda. Is it not unconscionable that while billions of dollars are being wasted on the development of weapons of mass destruction and measures to verify their existence, we still have not accepted the moral

imperative to find adequate financial resources to fight the war against the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and tuberculosis, which are already causing massive destruction in terms of human lives in the world? Is there not a link between the cost of development of weapons of mass destruction and the prospects for achieving the Development Goals of the Millennium Declaration?

We must revisit the whole question of the relationship between disarmament and development. My delegation, therefore, welcomes the Secretary-General's proposal for the establishment of a group of governmental experts to undertake an appraisal of the relationship between disarmament and development in the current international context.

On the issue of revitalizing the work of the First Committee, my delegation is ready to participate in the consultations that the Chairman indicated he will initiate during the course of this session.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to express my delegation's pleasure at seeing you, Mr. Chairman, presiding over the First Committee, as well as to congratulate you on your assumption the Committee's chairmanship. There is no doubt that your chairmanship represents the culmination of your and your country's ongoing commitment to international peace and security.

I followed closely the statement made by Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. I noted with interest his call to explore ways of strengthening international peace and security. In that regard, I wish to congratulate him on his appointment as well as for the scope of his statement.

It has become perfectly clear from the many debates held both within and outside the United Nations that international peace and security constitute the alpha and the omega, and in fact the ultimate goal, of all of the international community's efforts. No human action can be successful in a hostile environment, in an atmosphere of insecurity or, quite simply, in a conflict situation. The balance of terror during the period of the cold war revealed the extreme vulnerability of human societies, and in particular the danger posed to them by the arms race.

Unfortunately, even the fall of the Berlin Wall was not able to dissipate that threat. Instead, it seems to have exacerbated the threat by way of the enormous investments that have been made in producing sophisticated weapons, the perfection of weapons of mass destruction, the production and stockpiling of chemical and biological weapons and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The escalation of terrorism is but an unfortunate example of this.

That situation is particularly worrisome given that other difficulties have arisen in recent years on the road to peace. In that connection, we have seen the Disarmament Commission — the sole United Nations negotiating body in the area of disarmament — flounder as a result of the renunciation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the non-implementation of the START Treaty. For the last five years, the Commission has been unable to adopt an agenda conducive to beginning fundamental debate.

For its part, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is still far from attaining the necessary number of signatures to bring it into force.

With regard to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), only the Review Conference planned for 2005 will be able to provide us with its true state of health, given that the decisions taken at the 2000 Conference have not truly been put in place.

We have not run the course of our pessimism, because the same disappointment is apparent in the realm of conventional weapons.

The conclusion of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines raised immense hopes for a large portion of the populations of developing countries, particularly those in conflicts or emerging from armed conflicts. However, we must note that, despite the efforts made, thousands of persons continue to be victims of these mines around the world. It is because of this situation that Burkina Faso will be hosting, in January of 2004, a subregional workshop within the framework of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on universalizing the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines. That workshop will make it possible for member States of ECOWAS to work towards the implementation of the Convention and towards the goal of the complete elimination of mines in Western Africa. It will also make it possible for member States to come to an agreement on preparations for the First Review

Conference of the Ottawa Convention, planned for 2004 in Nairobi.

With regard to light and small-calibre weapons, the session held right here in 2001 clearly revealed the limits of the actions provided for. At the time, we deplored the fact that the countries that had the means refused to heed the distress call of the victimized countries, who were only requesting that weapons be sold only to State actors or their representatives and who wanted an effective implementation of marking and tracing, as well as the strict regulation of the role of intermediaries.

The menace weighing on mankind is a collective one, and thus requires a collective response. Our efforts, if they are to be successful, must focus on the establishment of a system of international relations that inspires greater confidence and cultivates the notion of interdependence. Collective well-being and social and economic development must be seen as the indispensable guarantors of peace and security.

Moved by peace and motivated by the will to cooperate with all States without exception, Burkina Faso will not fail to make its modest contribution to this common effort. It is in this sense, on the international level, that, since the very beginning, it has become a part of the world dynamic in the struggle against terrorism. My Government has also submitted to the Security Council the reports required by resolution 1373 (2001), and it has put experts in the area of peacekeeping operations at the disposal of the Organization. In addition, Burkina Faso has just become a party to seven conventions and one protocol related to the struggle against terrorism.

At the regional level, Burkina Faso is participating actively in the establishment of African mechanisms that will contribute to peace and security. Faced with the uncontrolled circulation of light weapons and the climate of insecurity, both linked to the multiplication of crises in Africa, and faced with bad governance and xenophobia, Burkina Faso has devoted itself to the quest for peace and collective security by adhering to the mechanisms negotiated within ECOWAS, including the Bamako moratorium on light weapons.

We have great hopes from the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, and particularly this Committee, whose importance does not need to be underscored.

Mr. Castellón Duarte (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would first of all like to congratulate you on your unanimous election to chair the deliberations of the First Committee, and wishes you success in this difficult task. We also want to assure you of our complete cooperation in discharging your duties. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau. I should like to take this occasion to welcome Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and to wish him success in his work.

My delegation fully associates itself the statement delivered by the distinguished delegation of Peru, on behalf of the Rio Group, but we would like, on this occasion, to bring up some matters of special interest for Nicaragua.

My delegation, along with others which have spoken in this Committee, are concerned by the decline in the role of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, which cannot, with respect to its scope, be replaced by any other types of negotiation. However, we do acknowledge the important complimentary document of the bilateral negotiations in this area.

In the field of multilateralism, we are concerned that the Conference on Disarmament remains stalled, as in years past. We are also concerned that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) will not be able to enter into force and that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) will be stymied by the obstinate refusal of some States to become party to it and by the threats of others to withdraw from the Treaty. We call for greater international efforts in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation to promote peace and security in all regions of the world and ensure a better world for present and future generations.

The problem of mines in Nicaragua is one of the results of the ten years of civil war that we suffered from 1979 to 1990. During that period, more than 135,000 land mines were indiscriminately sown on bridges, roads, electrical towers and other structures, mostly along our borders with neighbouring countries. There were also landmines laid by the guerrillas, of which there remains no record whatsoever. The mine problem was worsened by Hurricane Mitch in 1998. Thousands of them were unearthed by the strong winds and rains, and scattered everywhere.

Anti-personnel mines constitute one of the worst results of the war, because they have affected vast areas of national production and infrastructure and have taken many human lives. By mid-year, 90,000 anti-personnel mines had been deactivated and some 46,000 still remained to be cleared, in an area of 135,00 square meters in northern Nicaragua. Under the coordination of the Organization of American States (OAS), three areas have been prioritized in 2003 for anti-personnel mine-clearance operations: Matagalpa and Wanito, Jalapa and Puerto Cabezas. Due to a number of problems, such as the lack of helicopters for medical evacuations, the topography, the difficulty in locating mines because of the lack of precise reference points, the movement of the mines from their original locations by rain and river currents, as well as the growth of vegetation in the mined areas, the mine-clearance operations will be concluded in Nicaragua in 2005, not in 2004 as originally planned.

Considering the experience acquired by Nicaraguans sappers, the Government of Nicaragua has decided to send 40 of them to Iraq to help in the mine-clearance operation in that country. As stated by President Bolaños, with this action we are, to a certain degree, paying our debt in acknowledgement of the humanitarian assistance received by Nicaragua throughout its history.

President Bolanos of Nicaragua submitted to the other Presidents of Central America, meeting in Guatemala on 17 July, a proposal for a programme on arms limitation and control to achieve a reasonable balance of forces and to promote stability, mutual trust and transparency in Central America. The Security Commission of the Central American Integration System endorsed implementation of that programme at the meeting held by Central American Presidents in Belize on 4 September.

This programme comprises security and confidence-building measures through the establishment of a reasonable balance of forces in Central America and to contribute to the institutionalization of civilian control over defence and security entities in the region.

Actions to be developed include establishing a mechanism for verification and control of inventories in every country and at the regional level, with the support of the Organization of American States (OAS); determining by consensus the end use of excessive weapons through destruction, stockpiling and transfer, in accordance with domestic legislation and relevant treaties; determining what are offensive and banned weapons, through consensus, pursuant to article 61, paragraph c, of the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security; establishing a moratorium on the acquisition of new weapons considered to be offensive; the timely, gradual and progressive destruction or exchange of weapons considered to be prohibited within the context of a reasonable balance of forces; the implementation at the regional level of a standardized methodology of expenses and defence, with the support of the United Nations and the OAS; the destruction of weapons confiscated in the fight against arms trafficking, drug activity, terrorism and illegal possession, pursuant to national legislation and the maximum limits determined by the context of reasonable balance of forces; and, finally, establishing a uniform register for weapons explosives and equipment.

The programme also comprises ratification of and, in this case, progress in the area of 10 international treaties on arms control adopted by the United Nations and the OAS. The programme also includes modernization and professionalization of the armed forces, in order to be better able to deal with terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime in all their facets and dimensions, as well as the challenges implicit in humanitarian aid and the protection of the population against natural disasters.

With the implementation of this programme, the Central American countries will be ensuring the modernization of mechanisms for defence and public security in the region, the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the maintenance of lasting peace.

In conclusion, I wish to express my delegation's support for your proposal, Sir, to revitalize the First Committee. However, like other delegations, we feel that this must be done within the context of revitalizing the General Assembly in the plenary group chaired by the President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Scherba (Ukraine): First of all, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, on your assumption of the chairmanship of this Committee, within this very important forum. I am confident that your diplomatic skills will lead our deliberations to a successful outcome. In this regard, you may be assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation. I would also like to express my

appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Nobuyasu Abe.

Last year's developments had significant implications for arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. Some of them were encouraging, as they charted positive trends, while some have highlighted the fact that the security and stability of the international community continues to be challenged, both globally and regionally, by the risks associated with the uncontrolled spread of conventional armaments, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the danger of such weapons falling into the hands of aggressive non-State actors.

Alarming signs currently observed in the field of nuclear non-proliferation dictate an urgent need to strengthen the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as the bedrock of global non-proliferation efforts.

Since its accession to the NPT, Ukraine has strictly fulfilled relevant Treaty obligations. Given the NPT's crucial contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security, we believe it is particularly important to promote its universality and to strengthen its viability through ensuring implementation of the Treaty in all its aspects by all Member States.

Ukraine welcomes the work done within the second session of the NPT Review Conference's Preparatory Committee, held this past spring in Geneva, and calls on all States to do their best to make a success of the next Preparatory Committee session, leading up to the 2005 Conference.

In this context, I would like to place special emphasis on the need for all States parties to the NPT to abide by the decisions of the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences, including the 13 practical steps towards nuclear disarmament.

We have to admit that progress in implementing the practical steps for the systematic and progressive efforts for nuclear disarmament, as set forth in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, remains far from satisfactory. Prospects of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) still appear gloomy, although that is the Treaty that is instrumental in advancing both non-proliferation and disarmament. As a full-fledged party to the CTBT, Ukraine urges the States still outside the Treaty to ratify or accede to it at an early date. We commend the utmost restraint being exercised by CTBT nuclear-weapon States parties and non-State parties by refraining from conducting nuclear-weapon-test explosions. We hope that they will continue to abide by their commitment to maintain the global nuclear-weapon-test moratorium.

The uncertain security environment in today's world increases the importance of strengthening the capability of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to verify declared nuclear activities and especially to detect and deter clandestine activities. This can be accomplished through the faithful and universal application of comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols. Ukraine fully endorses measures envisaged by the Additional Protocol to the IAEA Safeguards Agreement. The preparatory activities for ratification of the Protocol, signed by Ukraine in 2000, have been under way.

Ukraine believes that legally binding security assurances by the nuclear-weapon States to the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT will significantly strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime by eliminating plausible incentives for pursuing nuclear capabilities. We strongly urge nuclear-weapon States to review their policies in this respect and to confirm the validity of the relevant decisions made by the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences.

The nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation processes are closely interconnected and interdependent. Positive trends in the field of nuclear-weapon reduction contribute substantially to strengthening the global non-proliferation regime, and vice versa. That is why Ukraine, after giving up its nuclear arsenal, remains committed to attaining the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world and why we share activities undertaken by the New Agenda Coalition group in this direction.

Ukraine welcomes efforts made by the United States of America and the Russian Federation, with a view to bringing the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty into force. Ukraine highly appreciates those efforts and believes that implementation of the Moscow Treaty will pave the way for attainment of the NPT disarmament goals. For its part, Ukraine — as a State that has contributed significantly to the cause of nuclear disarmament within the framework of the Treaty Between the United States of America and the

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START I) — hopes that the reductions in nuclear arsenals under the Moscow Treaty will be irreversible.

In that connection, let me emphasize that, on 30 October 2001, Ukraine completed fulfilment of its obligations in accordance with the first stage of START I implementation by destroying the last silo for SS-24 intercontinental ballistic missiles. We continue to carry out our START I commitments despite difficulties that we faced recently with regard to receiving assistance in liquidating loaded motor cases of SS-24 missiles. Ukraine believes it is important that the non-strategic nuclear weapons reduction process be further pursued and that the existing 1991-1992 regime be strengthened.

In view of the current security challenges stemming from the risk of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related materials, the issue of concluding the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) has come to the fore. This year's annual session of the Conference on Disarmament has witnessed an important cross-group effort to reach agreement on a programme of work. We express hope that that positive trend will result in practical measures.

One of the past year's most positive events was the establishment of the Group of Eight (G-8) Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, launched at the G-8 Kananaskis Summit. We consider that step to be an essential contribution to enhancing multilateral non-proliferation efforts. We attach great importance to practical realization of the Kananaskis initiative, and we reiterate our readiness to participate actively in it.

The growing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction parallels the spread of ballistic missiles. To curb that negative trend, Ukraine — along with many other States — signed the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation in November 2002. Ukraine is convinced that the elaboration of legally binding international instruments on missile-related issues should take place within a multilateral, universal and non-discriminatory framework.

Ensuring proper implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is one of Ukraine's key priorities in the sphere of non-proliferation and arms control. We believe strongly that a complete ban on chemical weapons and their destruction will contribute greatly to eliminating threats to international security and to global and regional stability. Ukraine calls on all countries that have not yet ratified or signed the Convention to do so as soon as possible. Efforts to strengthen the CWC and to support the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons must be continued.

Ukraine fully supports the purposes of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) and complies strictly with its obligations under the Convention. Our country submits annually to the United Nations Secretariat necessary information on BTWC implementation within the framework of confidence-building measures. We welcome the decision of the Fifth Review Conference of the BTWC to hold three annual meetings of States parties to the Convention — commencing in 2003 and ending with the Sixth Review Conference — with a view to elaborating new approaches to ensuring full compliance with the Convention's provisions.

The gravity of the problem of small arms and light weapons is illustrated clearly by the fact that such weapons cause more than 90 per cent of all casualties in armed conflicts. The Programme of Action adopted at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in 2001, is a historic milestone representing the international community's collective will to address such problems. We support the conclusions reached at the first biennial meeting concerning the need to enhance the capacity of local authorities and communities in crisis or post-conflict situations to control illegal weapons and their traffickers and of conducting systematic, action-oriented research on the dynamics of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

As a country that has experienced significant human losses during the conflict periods in its history, Ukraine has shown a clear understanding of, and has devoted due attention to, the problems of countries that continue to suffer from the wide-scale use of mines. Ukraine, a mine-affected country with enormous stockpiles of anti-personnel land mines inherited from the former Soviet Union, has become actively engaged with its partners — particularly Canada — in a project aimed at destroying its stocks of such mines. Following the Framework Arrangement between the Government of Canada and the Government of Ukraine on the destruction of anti-personnel land mines in Ukraine and

the memorandum of understanding between the Government of Ukraine and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Maintenance and Supply Organization on logistics support cooperation, a project to destroy 400,000 PMN-type anti-personnel land mines was begun in Ukraine in July 2002. Today, it is with much appreciation that we welcome the successful completion of that project. Although the PMN project is a positive achievement of our common efforts, we should bear in mind that PMN mines constitute only 7 per cent of Ukraine's anti-personnel land mine stockpiles.

The events of 11 September 2001 highlighted the importance of effective export control measures. Ukraine considers it essential that all exporting States assume their responsibilities and take measures to ensure that exports of sensitive materials, equipment and technologies are subject to appropriate surveillance and control. In that context, we support the efforts of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Australia Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime and the Wassenaar Arrangement to prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery and, in the case of the Wassenaar Arrangement, to promote transparency and greater responsibility in transferring conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies.

Before I conclude, my delegation wishes to pay the highest tribute to the Department for Disarmament Affairs, under the effective leadership of Under-Secretary-General Nobuyasu Abe. We are confident that, under Mr. Abe's guidance, the Department will continue to play a supportive role in the service of States Members of the Organization.

Mr. Løvald (Norway): I should like to begin by joining previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this important Committee of the General Assembly. The First Committee has an important role in contributing to international peace and security, and that task is even more important today, when we are facing new security threats. I am confident that, under your leadership, we will have a successful session. I should also like to express support for the statement of the European Union, with which Norway has aligned itself.

The security environment has changed profoundly in recent years. International terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction have become major threats to international peace and security. Terrorists take advantage of weak and failed States, where they can operate and plan new, devastating attacks. Afghanistan, before 11 September 2001, is a case in point. We can imagine the horrific implications if terrorist groups gain possession of weapons of mass destruction.

The international community must therefore respond to the new proliferation challenges. Much has been achieved through the United Nations — including the Security Council — and broad-based coalitions. We strongly support the Proliferation Security Initiative and the current efforts of the European Union, as set out in the Declaration of the European Union-Western Balkans Summit, held at Thessaloniki.

Multilateralism is a core principle of arms control and non-proliferation. We must ensure that existing multilateral instruments are sufficiently equipped to meet the new proliferation threats. The First Committee should be a central arena for dealing with these fundamental questions.

Universal adherence and compliance with the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation treaties will provide us with added collective security. Thus, given the new security landscape, we should consider how to further strengthen their enforcement provisions. There must be a heavy price for non-compliance. We are pleased that the Secretary-General raised this question in his report to the General Assembly on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. We would expect the Security Council to follow up on this challenge.

Norway is particularly concerned that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is under stress. The NPT has for decades been a cornerstone of our collective security and the norms set by the Treaty are even more important today. We must therefore preserve and strengthen the integrity and authority of the NPT. The current review cycle is a good instrument for this purpose and we must do what we can to ensure that the 2005 Review Conference has a positive outcome. We must all contribute to that end and be prepared to make the necessary compromises.

It is important that the 2005 Conference further reinforce the non-proliferation norm through strengthened safeguards. Any nation seeking nuclear technology for peaceful programmes must be obliged to implement the International Atomic Energy Agency

(IAEA) Additional Protocol to the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement. It is also essential that the 2005 Conference lead to progress on the disarmament agenda. We welcome the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Strategic Offensive Reductions as a substantial contribution to reductions in strategic arsenals, but we must advance further and Norway reiterates its call for irreversible reductions in nuclear weapons, including non-strategic weapons.

We sincerely regret that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has not yet entered into force, even though this is an obligation under the NPT. We welcome the self-imposed test moratoriums. Such moratoriums cannot, however, replace multilateral, legally binding, verifiable commitments. The recent Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT in Vienna showed that the vast majority of nations represented in this room are committed to the Treaty. We must preserve the integrity of the norms set by the CTBT. We are concerned that the development of new weapons may result in the resumption of tests. The nuclear threshold must be retained.

The last NPT Review Conference called for a commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. Norway shares the broad international agreement that the cut-off treaty is the next logical step on our multilateral disarmament agenda. We welcome the existing moratoriums declared by some nuclear-weapon States, but a legally binding prohibition provides the best guarantee against the future production of fissile materials for weapon purposes.

The impasse in the Conference on Disarmament has prevented us from moving ahead. Multilateralism has clearly not yet delivered in this case. The Conference has remained passive while new nations have apparently been trying to develop nuclear weapons.

The announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its withdrawal from the NPT is a serious challenge to the authority and integrity of the Treaty. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to reverse its course of action, to comply with its obligations under the NPT and to cooperate fully and unconditionally with the IAEA.

The six-party meeting in Beijing at the end of August was an important step towards that end. The dialogue must continue. The aim must be to find a lasting settlement for stability and security on the Korean peninsula and in the region. As a general rule, all matters relating to possible non-compliance with the NPT regime must be dealt with in a multilateral and transparent manner. In any well-documented case of non-compliance, the IAEA must be given access to investigate, draw conclusions and decide on the necessary action in accordance with its mandate. That applies to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as well as to Iran.

The IAEA Board of Governors has sent a clear message to Iran. It should be in Iran's interest to cooperate fully with that United Nations agency. The only way for the country to restore international confidence in its peaceful intentions is to respond to the IAEA resolution of 12 September.

With respect to other types of weapons of mass destruction, we are satisfied with the positive outcome of the First Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) Review Conference, but we have not yet achieved full universalization of that important instrument. Too many countries have chosen not to be bound by CWC obligations. More has to be done on the destruction and eventual elimination of existing stockpiles of chemical weapons. As long as these stockpiles exist, they can fall into the wrong hands.

There is also an urgent need to deal with biological weapons. No one is safe from biological terrorism. We must therefore further reinforce the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) and uphold the authority of the 1925 Geneva Protocol in order to prevent biological agents or toxins from being used as weapons. All nations should adopt and implement adequate national legislation for implementing their BTWC obligations. We must promote full universalization of the Convention.

The Hague Code of Conduct is essential to our overall efforts to halt the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. The work for universal adherence to the Code must continue. Our long-term objective should be that the Code is translated into a legally-binding and globally-accepted agreement.

Certain conventional weapons have been described as "weapons of mass destruction in slow motion". Each year, they are responsible for millions of deaths and injuries. Anti-personnel mines, unexploded

ordinance and the proliferation of illicit small arms pose a challenge to human security, a challenge that must be dealt with in multilateral forums. We must work to strengthen the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons with a new legally binding protocol on explosive remnants of war and a protocol dealing with the humanitarian challenges posed by anti-vehicle mines.

We also need to implement and further enforce the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. This is a most urgent and important task. Norway has supported the efforts to establish a new instrument on tracing and marking. We have also devoted considerable resources to combating the illicit brokering of small arms. We are eager to work with others to achieve concrete progress on these issues.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction is a response to an urgent humanitarian challenge. We must renew our political and financial commitment to the Convention. Norway has taken a lead through the establishment of a resource mobilization contact group.

The multilateral approach to disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation has been essential to our collective security. This has long served us well, but now new challenges have emerged. We agree with the Secretary-General that the performance of the international community in dealing with new threats and challenges is uneven. We have to be innovative if we are to revive multilateralism and get the international community to work better together.

The United Nations is at the centre of multilateral efforts on non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. The General Assembly has played an important role in addressing new topics and setting the agenda for multilateral negotiations. But again, we fully concur with the Secretary-General's view that it should not be shameful or embarrassing to question the adequacy or the efficiency of United Nations bodies.

We welcome consultations on the functioning of the First Committee of the General Assembly. The current format of the general debate prevents us from addressing key security matters and we do not believe that an overcrowded agenda requiring action on more than 50 resolutions and decisions will enhance our collective security. Many of those resolutions are forgotten almost as soon as they are adopted.

The First Committee should focus on major security challenges and promote unity of purpose on addressing new threats. The Committee should serve as an inspiration for the international community.

We are circulating a non-paper today containing ideas that we believe could make the First Committee more relevant, and some suggestions on how to enhance the Committee's role. We believe that the number of resolutions should be reduced, that we should strive to manage our time more efficiently and that we should have more integrated thematic discussions.

We know that other countries have put forward their ideas. We are pleased that there will be open-ended informal consultations after the general debate, and we think they should continue after the current session of the Committee.

An enhanced role for the First Committee will have a positive spin-off for both the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission. Our aim is to empower the Conference on Disarmament to do what it is supposed to do: negotiate treaties that enhance our collective security. We now need to reflect on how the Disarmament Commission can provide added value.

The purpose of reforming the multilateral institutions dealing with disarmament and non-proliferation is to make them more relevant in a changing security environment. If we fail to do that, we run the risk of reducing the influence of the United Nations, as well as of multilateralism in general.

We are facing new challenges. We have an opportunity to work better together to meet these challenges. This will strengthen our common security. Let us take this opportunity.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your appointment as Chairman of the First Committee. I also pay tribute to the other members of the Bureau. My delegation looks forward to working constructively with you.

At the outset, I would like to express Iceland's support for the statement made by the Ambassador of Italy, on behalf of the European Union.

We all recall the words of Secretary-General Kofi Annan in the General Assembly that we must not shy away from questions about the adequacy and effectiveness of the rules and instruments at our disposal. In his agenda for change, the Secretary-General specifically pointed to such problems as the overlapping of items and the need to further rationalize the General Assembly. He also mentioned the energy which goes into the negotiation of resolutions of limited scope and policy impact.

This important Committee should be no exception to the examination that Secretary-General Annan has encouraged the States Members of the United Nations to undertake.

My delegation welcomes your intention, Mr. Chairman, to organize consultations during this session on the organization and working methods of the First Committee. Iceland also welcomes initiatives and proposals which have been submitted by Member States on this issue. We must look closely at ways of improving the tools at our disposal. We should consider a reduction in the number of agenda items and resolutions and more focused thematic debates on strengthening the multilateral approach to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. Failure to streamline, in a timely manner, the work of this important Committee — and, indeed, of the Organization as a whole — will risk its marginalization in our fast-moving and dynamic security environment.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a key element in the multilateral effort to slow down the terrifying expansion of weapons of mass destruction. Iceland would like to congratulate Cuba and Timor-Leste on becoming parties to the Treaty, thus further strengthening its multilateral credentials. We would at the same time like to add our voice to those who have called on India and Pakistan to meet all the requirements set out in Security Council resolution 1172 (1998).

An encouraging element in the discussions, held last spring, at the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference, was the considerable extent of agreement among Member States on the importance of full compliance by all States with the NPT. The key to this is transparency and the willingness of States which have nuclear capabilities to take action to allay the concerns of other States, where such concerns arise. Iceland therefore aligns itself with those who have expressed concern about the decision of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to renounce the NPT and to restart its nuclear programme in order to produce nuclear weapons.

In this context, we encourage the Iranian authorities to fully comply with International Atomic Energy Agency's requirements for transparency in the development of their nuclear programme.

Iceland also supports the Proliferation Security Initiative as a practical approach to counter the growing challenge posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Effective measures urgently need to be put in place where they matter.

The risk of major environmental damage from possible nuclear dumping is of particular concern to Icelanders, an island nation much of whose livelihood is based on the living resources of the sea. We reiterate the importance of General Assembly resolution 56/24 L, of 29 November 2001, on the prohibition of the dumping of radioactive wastes. This item is included on this year's First Committee agenda. It is not enough to avoid the destruction inflicted by nuclear war, vitally important as that is; we must also ensure that appropriate measures are taken to prevent any dumping of nuclear or radioactive wastes which would gradually, through carelessness or criminal activity, wreak terrible destruction in their own way on the world in which we all live.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a vital link in the network of treaties which aim at arresting and reducing the development, manufacture and potential use of weapons of mass destruction. Iceland would like to encourage all Annex 2 States to ratify that important Treaty.

Nuclear weapons are, of course, not the only weapons of mass destruction that pose a threat. Indeed, biological and chemical weapons are in some ways a greater risk as they may be more manageable for terrorist groups. It is therefore encouraging, given the problems encountered last year, that the First Meeting of Experts of States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention was held in August.

On small arms, we support the proposal of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts to establish an open-ended working group to develop a legally binding instrument on the identification and tracing of small arms. There is still much preparatory

work to be done, not least the elaboration of a United Nations definition of small arms.

Finally, with reference to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, we deplore the ongoing stalemate. Substantive work should be revived from the outset in 2004 and must have a pragmatic focus.

The Chairman: Following an official request by the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) to make a statement to the First Committee, I would now like, with the consent of the Committee, to invite Mr. Wolfgang Hoffman, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO, to make a statement.

Mr. Hoffmann (Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization): First of all, let me congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of your very important role in the United Nations.

I am pleased to be here today to report on the activities of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO). The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is one of the cornerstones of the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Its total ban of any nuclear test explosions in any environment will help end the development of ever-more sophisticated nuclear weapons, as well as arrest the proliferation of these weapons.

When the CTBT was adopted by the General Assembly on 10 September 1996, we were aware that the success of the Treaty would depend on two crucial factors: its universality and its verifiability. On both accounts, we have made substantial progress since then.

As of today, the Treaty has been signed by a total of 169 States and ratified by 105. Thirty-two of those ratifications are by annex 2 States — the 44 States listed in the Treaty whose ratification is required for entry into force. The level and pace of signatures and ratifications indicates the firm support of the international community for the Treaty.

The third Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT, which was held in Vienna only last month, agreed on concrete measures to promote signatures and ratification of the Treaty. Furthermore, it demonstrated the commitment of States to bringing about the entry into force of the CTBT and to upholding existing testing moratoriums until that time. The Final Declaration of the Conference made ample reference to relevant decisions by the General Assembly and other international forums. Ambassador Greenberg of Finland, the coordinator of the Conference, will brief the First Committee on the details of the Conference during the upcoming thematic debate.

The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization was established six years ago to carry out the necessary preparations for the effective implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and to prepare for the first session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty. The main activity of the Commission and its Provisional Technical Secretariat in recent years has been the establishment of the verification regime to monitor Treaty compliance.

The global verification regime needs to be operational at the Treaty's entry into force. It will be capable of detecting nuclear explosions underground, in water and in the atmosphere.

The International Monitoring System (IMS) consists of 321 monitoring stations and 16 radionuclide laboratories that monitor the earth for evidence of a nuclear explosion. The IMS uses seismic, hydroacoustic and infrasound monitoring technologies to detect possible nuclear explosions. Radionuclide monitoring technologies collect and analyse air samples for evidence of the physical products created by nuclear explosions. Progress in establishing these facilities has been good, considering the engineering challenges that face the establishment of this first worldwide monitoring network. More than 50 per cent of the monitoring stations are now operational. Good progress in establishing the IMS was made possible in great part by those States hosting facilities. I would like to use this opportunity to thank States for their help and flexibility and to express my hope that the good cooperation will continue.

A Global Communications Infrastructure (GCI) carries the seismic, hydroacoustic, infrasound and radionuclide data from facilities to the International Data Centre. This global satellite communications network is also used to distribute data and reports relevant to Treaty verification to the States signatories.

The International Data Center (IDC) in Vienna supports the verification responsibilities of States signatories by providing the products and services needed for effective Treaty monitoring. The Centre receives raw data from monitoring stations around the world, which it processes, analyses and transmits to States for final analysis. Improved software is enhancing precision in locating the events which produce seismic, hydroacoustic, infrasound or radionuclide data, and the verification system as a whole is being continuously developed and refined.

On-site inspections as provided for in the Treaty are a final verification measure, and the development of a draft on-site inspections operational manual is a key task for the Preparatory Commission. The Commission is also acquiring inspection equipment and building up a pool of potential inspectors.

While the primary purpose of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty verification regime is to verify compliance with the Treaty effectively, the CTBT verification technologies, IMS data and IDC products have the potential to offer a range of useful civil and scientific applications for sustainable development and the betterment of human welfare. Discussions on the civil and scientific applications of CTBT verification technologies are ongoing, most recently upon invitation of the Hungarian Government in Sopron.

Seismic, hydroacoustic and infrasound data can be used in studies of the Earth's structure and for research on earthquakes, volcanic eruption forecasting, tsunami warnings, underwater event location and sea-temperature and climate-change monitoring. The data can assist in minimizing the effect of volcanic eruptions on civil aviation and can be used for oceanic swell research and atmospheric and meteorological studies. Radionuclide technologies offer opportunities for detecting radionuclide dispersion, monitoring radiation levels and studying natural radioactivity, as well as supporting atmospheric studies, biological research and environmental change tracking. Follow-up meetings and seminars are already taking place amongst policy-makers and scientists in support of the work of the Commission.

The Commission organizes training programmes and workshops in support of States signatories in the enhancement of national technical capability for the implementation of the Treaty. Those include training courses for IMS station operators in all four verification technologies; training courses for data analysis, storage and management; on-site inspection technologies; workshops for global communications infrastructure; and workshops on international cooperation and national implementation of the Treaty. In addition, the Commission promotes international cooperation among States signatories for them to participate in the fullest possible exchange relating to these verification technologies and the establishment and operation of national data centres.

On 15 June 2000, the General Assembly adopted the Agreement to Regulate the Relationship between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, thereby accepting the Preparatory Commission as a new member of the United Nations family. The Commission remains an independent international organization, but has been given formal status by which we can contribute to the goals of the United Nations. CTBTO staff use the United Nations laissez-passer on duty travel. We have concluded a services agreement with United Nations Development Programme, which provides us with operational support.

Under this Agreement, our links and interactions with the United Nations and its programmes, funds and specialized agencies are developing even further, and options for enhanced cooperation and support are under review. In order to fully contribute to the work of the United Nations family, the CTBTO Preparatory Commission has requested full membership in the United Nations System's Chief Executives Board (CEB). The Preparatory Commission already participates in the work of the high-level committees of the CEB, but this participation cannot replace full membership in the main coordinating body. In the light of the disarmament-related issues contained in the Millennium Declaration, we feel it to be particularly important that the CTBTO Preparatory Commission should be able to contribute fully to the work of the United Nations family. We believe that it would be of great significance for the General Assembly to be kept abreast of the rapid development of our new and growing organization on a closer basis. In times of increasing concern about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the reports of organizations specialized in this field should be of particular relevance to the deliberations of the General Assembly.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that, seven years after its opening for signature, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has the confirmed support of the international community, and is recognized as playing an important role in nuclear disarmament and in non- proliferation. The recently held Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT provided new momentum to our common quest for a universal and verifiable Treaty. I am convinced that the important deliberations of the First Committee will provide further impetus to, and a conducive environment for, further progress in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Chairman: Before adjourning the meeting, I would simply like to urge delegations to show continued flexibility in terms of the timing of their statements. I do recognize that it is not always easy, especially for New York-based representatives — now that the General Assembly is in session and permanent representatives, deputy permanent representatives and others have to make a great number of statements — to be available for the First Committee, if and when they are needed. I do appreciate the flexibility shown by three delegations today. I hope that will get a faithful following.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.